



# STATE OF IOWA

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DATE: March 8, 2004

TO: Beth Lenstra

FROM: Mary A. Benning

SUBJECT: Questions from Justice Systems Appropriations Subcommittee

The following response pertain a question asked of the Department of Corrections during the presentation to the Appropriations Subcommittee for Justice Systems.

## Question:

Please provide information concerning county jail capacity and populations.

## Answer:

The Department of Corrections does provide inspections of county jails, and maintain statistics on those inspected jails on the date of inspection. As these dates are spread over a significant period of time, the statistics maintained are not a reflection of recent or average populations and capacity levels of the county jails. As part of general jail inspection duties, the Department of Corrections does receive and maintain self-reported information from the individual counties concerning various items of information, including average daily populations and capacities. A review of these annual jail statistics from July through January 2003, reveals a capacity amongst the 96 county jails of 4627 with a daily average population of 3449 offenders. Again, these beds are spaced around 99 counties, and do fluctuate on a daily basis. As well, the capacity bed space provided by the counties does include bed space involving 24-hour holds, which could not be utilized for longer terms confinement of offenders. For example, Washington County is only authorized to provide services for ten 24-hour hold beds, and has a rated capacity of 0.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Division of Criminal Justice and Juvenile Planning of the Iowa Department of Human Rights also has compiled information pertaining to jail space in its publication *Selected Information About County Jails and Adult Detention Facilities in Iowa*. A copy of this publication can be located at the following website: <http://www.state.ia.us/government/dhr/cjip/pdfs/CountyJails.pdf>.

The mission of the Iowa Department of Corrections is to:  
**Protect the Public, the Employees, and the Offenders**

## Question

What are the options for integrating the jail and detention facilities into the state correctional system?

## Answer

Before listing possible options, an outline of potential issues, legal and fiscal, and legislative needs to be documented.

1. The DOC is funded for 7,800 offenders; today's count is 8,566. The Department absorbs the cost of these additional offenders by not filling needed correctional staff positions.
2. The Department cannot reimburse counties for holding state offenders from existing appropriations.
3. Historically, counties have charged significantly more money for holding state violators than it costs DOC to house the same offender. Two examples below.
  - A concept for a Southern Regional Jail Commission included a \$50.00/day charge for minimum-risk offenders at a time when DOC provided the same security level for \$35.00/day.
  - The current county confinement charges run from \$45.00 - \$78.00 per day.
4. None of the county charges noted above includes legally required services and programs such as: legal access to attorneys, education, medical (nursing, psychiatric, general medicine, pharmacy, etc.), and treatment programs for specifically identified behavioral disorders such as anger management, release programming, work and substance abuse.
5. The possible offender for transfer to a program of this nature are also the same ones that provide community service and institutional work.
6. Historically, the counties with the highest number of offenders incarcerated do not have the empty jail beds to meet the demand that would be created by this program. The empty jail beds in this state are typically in rural Iowa counties.
7. The counties would be required to have access to the ICON and Parole Board system for record keeping, data sharing, and release purposes.

8. Currently, DOC provides tele-medicine services through the ICN as well as parole hearings; these services would have to be provided by the county.
9. Medical issues: How would the jail transport to the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics? The counties would treat this as a reimbursable expense that DOC does not have funding for.
10. Religious services must be provided to all documented religions and the county jails do not provide this service.
11. The inspections, audits, and oversight functions will require an increase in DOC staff.

Regretfully, this list could go on to include such issues as: pill lines, visiting, property, and other daily activities.

**The options are as follows.**

1. Create a system of regional jails. Currently, Senator Angelo has a bill for the Southern Regional Jail Concept at a cost of \$15,000,000.
2. Shift the focus from state offenders being housed in jails to federal prisoners returning to Iowa.
3. Provide necessary funding to the state and counties to solve the issues, and others addressed above and proceed with a system that transfers minimum custody offenders to jails.